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SUBSTITUTE SPECIFICATION AND CLAIMS

COUNTER TRACK JOINT WITH OPTIMISED BUILDING SPACE

Technical Field

[0001] The invention relates to a constant velocity joint in the form of a counter track joint with the following characteristics: an outer joint part having a first longitudinal axis and comprising first outer ball tracks and second outer ball tracks; an inner joint part having a second longitudinal axis and comprising first inner ball tracks and second inner ball tracks; the first outer ball tracks and the first inner ball tracks form first pairs of tracks; the second outer ball tracks and the second inner ball tracks form second pairs of tracks; the pairs of tracks each accommodate a torque transmitting ball; a ball cage is positioned between the outer joint part and the inner joint part and comprises circumferentially distributed cage windows which each receive at least one of the balls; when the joint is in the aligned condition, the first pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane in a first direction, and when the joint is in the aligned condition, the second pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane in a second direction.

Background

[0002] Counter track joints of the aforementioned type are basically known from U.S. Publication No. 2004/0033837 A1, wherein joints with 6 balls and with 8 balls are shown. The type of ball tracks here corresponds to the type known from Rzeppa joints (RF joints) and undercut free-joints (UF joints). This means that the center lines of the ball tracks consist of uniform radii (RF joint) or consist of radii and adjacent axially parallel lines (UF joint). In the described counter track joints, the axial opening direction of the pairs of tracks alternates circumferentially, resulting in the type of counter track joint.

[0003] Known from DE 103 37 612 A1 are counter track joints in which the track center lines of the first pairs of tracks having an opening angle with an opening direction with aligned joint pointing toward the joint bottom designed in such a way that the opening angle experiences a reversal in its opening direction starting at a

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specific articulation angle when the joint is articulated. In particular, this is realized by virtue of the fact that the center lines of the ball tracks of the first pairs of tracks are S-shaped, and thereby each exhibit a turning point.

[0004] Known inter alia from U.S. Publication No. 2004/116192 A1 are counter track joints in which the center lines of the first ball tracks have a turning point near the joint opening, so that the center lines of the first outer ball tracks are S-shaped. Due to the symmetry condition, the same holds true for the center lines of the first inner ball tracks of the joint inner part. The articulation angle of these counter track joints can be increased in this way.

[0005] Joints of the kind mentioned at the outset have been manufactured in various sizes, wherein the geometric conditions were derived from the available ball sizes taking into account the required torque capacity, using standard balls from ball bearing manufacture as the joint balls. In addition, the configuration of known joints has also been determined or influenced by the fitting dimensions of the available intermediate shafts, i.e., in particular the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines of such intermediate shafts, and must correspond to the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines in the joint inner part.

Summary Of The Invention

[0006] An object of this invention is to create a counter track joint of the kind mentioned at the outset optimized to the building space, which occupies the least possible radial building space at a given torque capacity.

[0007] A first solution provides that the ratio (V1) between the pitch circle diameter (PCDS) of the shaft splines in the joint inner part to the third power and the product of ball diameter (DK) squared and pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) assumes a value of between 0.9 and 1.3, i.e.,

$$0.9 < V1 < 1.3 \text{ with } V1 = \text{PCDS}^3 / (\text{DK}^2 \cdot \text{PCDB}).$$

[0008] In a second solution, the ratio (V3) between the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines in the joint inner part PCDS and the OR factor lies between 0.34

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and 0.37, wherein the OR factor is defined as the sum of the pitch circle diameter of the balls (PCDB) with aligned joint and the ball diameter (DK), so that

$$0.34 < V3 < 0.37 \text{ with } V3 = PCDS / (PCDB + DK).$$

[0009] The above approaches are based on postulations that the optimized configuration must have the necessary section modulus of the shaft splines in the joint inner part, and at the same time that the permissible load on the balls may not be exceeded taking into account the Hertz pressure, and finally that the outer diameter of the joint is to be kept low. To this end, the above approaches are used to indicate suitable configuration conditions with which these requirements are satisfied by selecting a large enough pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines and ball diameter, wherein the pitch circle diameter of the balls, being of importance besides the ball diameter for the outer diameter of the joint is designed as low as possible.

[0010] Each of the two approaches mentioned leads to the objective on its own. However, the result can be optimized by also using both approaches in combination to further pinpoint the results according to the invention.

[0011] One embodiment provides that the ratio (V2) between the IR factor and the OR factor measures between 0.525 and 0.585, wherein the IR factor is defined as the difference between the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) and the ball diameter (DK), and the OR factor is defined as the sum of the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint PCDB and the ball diameter DK, so that

$$0.525 < V2 < 0.585 \text{ with } V2 = (PCDB - DK) / (PCDB + DK).$$

[0012] In combination with at least one of the two aforementioned approaches, this dimensioning yields a particularly favorable result.

[0013] Another embodiment further provides that the ratio (V4) between the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines in the joint inner part (PCDS) and the IR factor measures between 0.58 and 0.65, wherein the IR factor is defined as the

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difference between the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) and the ball diameter (DK), so that

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.65 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

[0014] In combination with at least one of the two aforementioned approaches, this dimensioning yields a particularly favorable result.

[0015] With respect to the forces on the ball cage and other properties that determine joint function, it has proven favorable to alternate the first pairs of tracks and the second pairs of tracks over the circumference of the joint.

[0016] The joint can be designed as a six-ball joint, and in a particularly favorable design, is an eight-ball joint. The joint is configured in a particularly advantageous way, wherein the articulation angle ranges from 25° to 45°, in particular from 30° to 40°. This stipulation means that the balls are still reliably slung in the inner and outer ball tracks within these articulation angle ranges, and that the first balls only start exiting the ball tracks at articulation angles exceeding these ranges.

[0017] The joint according to the invention can be designed as a disc joint with unilateral flanging on the joint outer part, or as a monoblock joint, wherein a joint bottom and shaft journal are integrally molded on the joint outer part.

[0018] Joints according to the invention can be used for the side shafts of motor vehicles that establish the connection between the differential output and wheel hub. In this case, there is a particularly favorable application as a differential-side fixed joint in such side shafts, which have two fixed joints and a plunging unit in the intermediate shaft.

[0019] Joints according to the invention can also be used in longitudinal drive shafts of motor vehicles that comprise at least one fixed joint and a plunging joint or at least two fixed joints and a plunging unit.

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[0020] Another application involves multi-part longitudinal drive shafts in motor vehicles, which in addition to a fixed joint have at least one intermediate joint and a plunging joint and/or at least one intermediate joint and a longitudinal plunging unit.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

[0021] Preferred exemplary embodiments of the invention are shown in the drawings, and will be described below.

[0022] Fig. 1 shows a counter track joint according to an embodiment of the invention with six balls, designed as a disc joint:

- A) in an axial view; and
- B) in a longitudinal section along the B-B line.

[0023] Fig. 2 shows a counter track joint according to an embodiment of the invention with eight balls, designed as a disc joint:

- A) in an axial view; and
- B) in a longitudinal section along the B-B line.

[0024] Fig. 3 shows a counter track joint according to an embodiment of the invention with six balls, designed as a monoblock joint:

- A) in an axial view;
- B) in a longitudinal section along the B-B line; and
- C) in a longitudinal section along the C-C line.

[0025] Fig. 4 shows a counter track joint according to an embodiment of the invention with eight balls, designed as a monoblock joint:

- A) in an axial view;
- B) in a longitudinal section along the B-B line; and
- C) in a longitudinal section along the C-C line.

[0026] Fig. 5 shows a drive shaft according to an embodiment of the invention with at least one joint according to the invention and a plunging unit in partial longitudinal section.

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[0027] Fig. 6 shows an installation scenario according to an embodiment of the invention for a drive shaft according to Fig. 5 in a motor vehicle in partial longitudinal section.

[0028] Fig. 7 shows a longitudinal drive shaft according to an embodiment of the invention with a fixed joint according to the invention and a plunging joint in longitudinal half section.

[0029] Fig. 8 shows a longitudinal drive shaft according to an embodiment of the invention with a fixed joint according to the invention as an intermediate joint, another universal joint as an intermediate joint, and a plunging joint in longitudinal half section.

Detailed Description

[0030] The two depictions on Fig. 1 will be described together below. The universal joint 11 according to the invention is designed as a so-called disc joint. It encompasses a joint outer part 12 with a first opening 13 and a second opening 14. The joint further encompasses a joint inner part 15, a ball cage 16 and torque-conveying balls 17. First outer ball tracks 18 in the joint outer part 12 and first inner ball tracks 19 in the joint inner part 15 accommodate balls 17₁ and form first pairs of tracks with each other. Second outer ball tracks 20 in the joint outer part 12 and second inner ball tracks 21 in the joint inner part 15 form second pairs of tracks with each other, which accommodate second balls 17₂. The two types of pairs of tracks (18, 19; 20, 21) are alternately arranged over the circumference. Six pairs of tracks are especially provided. The first pairs of tracks form an opening angle with each other that points in a first direction R₁ to the opening 13. The second pairs of tracks form an opening angle with each other that points in a second direction R₂ toward the opening 14. A center joint plane E that accommodates the centers P of the balls intersects the longitudinal axis of the joint defined by the longitudinal axes A₁₂ of the joint outer part and A₁₅ of the joint inner part in a joint center M. The ball cage 16 holds the first balls 17₁ and second balls 17₂ in alternating circumferentially distributed cage windows 24₁, 24₂. The pitch circle diameter on which the ball centers P lie with the aligned joint is denoted with PCDB. The pitch circle diameter of

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the insertion opening 27 of the joint inner part 15, which generally has shaft splines not shown here in detail, is denoted with PCDS. The ball diameter is marked DK.

[0031] The two depictions on Fig. 2 will be described together below. The universal joint 11₂ according to the invention is designed as a so-called disc joint. It encompasses a joint outer part 12₂ with a first opening 13 and a second opening 14. The joint further encompasses a joint inner part 15₂, a ball cage 16₂ and torque-conveying balls 17. First outer ball tracks 18 in the joint outer part 12₂ and first inner ball tracks 19 in the joint inner part 15₂ accommodate balls 17₁ and form first pairs of tracks with each other. Second outer ball tracks 20 in the joint outer part 12₂ and second inner ball tracks 21 in the joint inner part 15₂ form second pairs of tracks with each other, which accommodate second balls 17₂. The two types of pairs of tracks (18, 19; 20, 21) are alternately arranged over the circumference. Eight pairs of tracks are especially provided. The first pairs of tracks form an opening angle with each other that points in a first direction R₁ to the opening 13. The second pairs of tracks form an opening angle with each other that points in a second direction R₂ toward the opening 14. A center joint plane E that accommodates the centers P of the balls intersects the longitudinal axis of the joint defined by the longitudinal axes A₁₂ of the joint outer part and A₁₅ of the joint inner part in a joint center M. The ball cage 16₂ holds the first balls 17₁ and second balls 17₂ in alternating circumferentially distributed cage windows 24₁, 24₂. The pitch circle diameter on which the ball centers P lie with the aligned joint is denoted with PCDB. The pitch circle diameter of the insertion opening 27 of the joint inner part 15₂, which generally has shaft splines not shown here in detail, is denoted with PCDS. The ball diameter is marked DK. Since two first pairs of tracks (18, 19) are cut in plane A-A, the sectionally depicted pairs of tracks both open in the first direction R₁ toward the opening 13.

[0032] The individual depictions on Fig. 3 will be described together below. The same details as on Fig. 1 are labeled with the same reference numbers, and modified features are indexed by 100. Reference is made to the corresponding description. Instead of a second opening 14, the joint outer part 11₂ here has a formed-on bottom 25 followed by a shaft journal 26. The joint otherwise largely corresponds with the one shown on Fig. 1. A first (upper) and second (lower) pair of

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tracks is cut in a radially opposing manner in plane AA, while a second (upper) and a first (lower) pair of tracks is cut in a radially opposing manner in plane BB.

[0033] The individual depictions on Fig. 4 will be described together below. Fig. 4 is a monoblock joint like Fig. 3, but includes eight balls like the joint of Fig. 2. The same details as on Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 are labeled with the same reference numbers, and modified features are further indexed by 100. Reference is made to the corresponding description. Instead of a second opening 14 (Fig. 2), the joint outer part 212 here has a formed-on bottom 25 followed by a shaft journal 26. The joint otherwise largely corresponds to the one shown in Fig. 2. Two second pairs of tracks 120, 121 are cut in the plane AA in a respectively radially opposing manner, while two first pairs of tracks 118, 119 are cut in a radially opposing manner in plane BB.

[0034] Fig. 5 shows a drive shaft that has a universal joint according to the invention as a monoblock joint based on one of Fig. 3 or 4, along with an intermediate shaft 35 and a second universal joint 31, which can also be a joint according to the invention, especially structurally identical with the joint 111, 211. The intermediate shaft 35 encompasses an axial plunging unit 28, which includes a sleeve 29, a journal 30 as well as torque-conveying balls active between the two and not denoted in specific detail as the essential components, and permits a longitudinal compensation of the drive shaft between the universal joints 111, 211 and 31.

[0035] Fig. 6 shows a drive shaft according to Fig. 5 installed as a side shaft in a motor vehicle. The shaft journal of the joint 111, 211 according to the invention is inserted into a differential gear 32 and secured therein, while the shaft journal of the second fixed joint 31 is inserted into a wheel hub arrangement 33 with a wheel mount 34. The same details are marked with the same reference numbers as on Fig. 5.

[0036] Fig. 7 shows a drive shaft according to the invention with a joint 11, 11₂ according to the invention designed as a disc joint according to one of Fig. 1 or 2, which takes the form of a longitudinal drive shaft. An intermediate shaft 41 comprises a shaft tube 39 and two shaft journals 36, 37 welded thereto. The shaft journal 37 is

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connected with a plunging joint 38, in particular a so-called VL-joint. The shaft journal 36 is connected with the joint 11, 11₂ according to the invention.

[0037] Fig. 8 shows a cardan shaft according to the invention with a joint 11, 11₂ according to the invention designed as a disc joint according to one of Fig. 1 or 2, which takes the form of a longitudinal drive shaft, and has a disc joint 42, an intermediate shaft 43 with a flange 44 and a journal 45 from right to left, along with an elastic intermediate bearing 46, wherein the joint 11, 11₂ is followed by another intermediate shaft 47 with a shaft journal 48, another intermediate bearing 49 and a universal joint 50; finally, there is another intermediate shaft 51 with shaft journals 52 connected with a universal plunging joint 53, in particular a VL-joint. Shafts of this kind are incorporated in the longitudinal drive train of motor vehicles between a gearbox output and a differential input.

[0038] In each embodiment of the joints 11, 11₂, 111, 211, the ratio (V1) between the pitch circle diameter (PCDS) of the shaft splines in the joint inner part to the third power and the product of ball diameter (DK) squared and pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) assumes a value of between 0.9 and 1.3, i.e.,

$$0.9 < V1 < 1.3 \text{ with } V1 = \text{PCDS}^3 / (\text{DK}^2 \cdot \text{PCDB}).$$

[0039] Alternatively or, in addition, the ratio (V3) between the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines in the joint inner part (PCDS) and the OR factor lies between 0.34 and 0.37, wherein the OR factor is defined as the sum of the pitch circle diameter of the balls (PCDB) with aligned joint and the ball diameter (DK), so that

$$0.34 < V3 < 0.37 \text{ with } V3 = \text{PCDS} / (\text{PCDB} + \text{DK}).$$

[0040] In combination with at least one of V1 or V3 being satisfied, the ratio (V2) between the IR factor and the OR factor measures between 0.525 and 0.585, wherein the IR factor is defined as the difference between the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) and the ball diameter (DK), and the OR factor is

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defined as the sum of the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) and the ball diameter (DK), so that

$$0.525 < V2 < 0.585 \text{ with } V2 = (PCDB - DK) / (PCDB + DK).$$

[0041] Further in combination with at least one of V1 or V3 being satisfied, the ratio (V4) between the pitch circle diameter of the shaft splines in the joint inner part (PCDS) and the IR factor measures between 0.58 and 0.65, wherein the IR factor is defined as the difference between the pitch circle diameter of the balls with aligned joint (PCDB) and the ball diameter (DK), so that

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.65 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

[0042] For each embodiment, the joint can be configured wherein the articulation angle ranges from 25° to 45°, in particular from 30° to 40°.

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In The Claims:

1. (currently amended) A constant velocity joint in the form of a counter track joint comprising:

an outer joint part having a first longitudinal axis (A_{12}) and comprising first outer ball tracks and second outer ball tracks;

5 an inner joint part having a second longitudinal axis (A_{15}) and comprising first inner ball tracks and second inner ball tracks;

the first outer ball tracks and the first inner ball tracks form first pairs of tracks;

10 the second outer ball tracks and the second inner ball tracks form second pairs of tracks;

the pairs of tracks each accommodate a torque transmitting ball;

a ball cage is positioned between the outer joint part and the inner joint part and comprises circumferentially distributed cage windows which each receive at least one of the balls;

15 when the joint is in the aligned condition, the first pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane (E) in a first direction R_1 , and

when the joint is in the aligned condition, the second pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane (E) in a second direction R_2 ,

20 wherein, when the joint is in the aligned condition, the following condition is satisfied:

$$0.9 < V1 < 1.3 \text{ with } V1 = PCDS^3 / (DK^2 \times PCDB)$$

where PCDS is the pitch circle diameter of the shaft toothing in the inner joint part, DK is the ball diameter, and PCDB is the pitch circle diameter of the balls.

25 2.-20. (cancelled)

21. (new) A constant velocity joint in the form of a counter track joint comprising:

an outer joint part having a first longitudinal axis (A_{12}) and comprising first outer ball tracks and second outer ball tracks;

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an inner joint part having a second longitudinal axis (A_{16}) and comprising first inner ball tracks and second inner ball tracks;

the first outer ball tracks and the first inner ball tracks form first pairs of tracks;

5 the second outer ball tracks and the second inner ball tracks form second pairs of tracks;

the pairs of tracks each accommodate a torque transmitting ball;

a ball cage is positioned between the outer joint part and the inner joint part and comprises circumferentially distributed cage windows which each receive at least one of the balls;

10 when the joint is in the aligned condition, the first pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane (E) in a first direction R_1 , and

when the joint is in the aligned condition, the second pairs of tracks open in the central joint plane (E) in a second direction R_2 ,

15 wherein, when the joint is aligned, the following is satisfied:

$$0.34 < V3 < 0.37 \text{ with } V3 = PCDS / (PCDB + DK)$$

where PCDS is the pitch circle diameter of the shaft toothing in the inner joint part, PCDB is the pitch circle diameter PCDB of the balls, and DK is the ball diameter.

20 22. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 1, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.525 < V2 < 0.585 \text{ with } V2 = (PCDB - DK)/(PCDB + DK).$$

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23. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 21, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.525 < V2 < 0.585 \text{ with } V2 = (PCDB - DK)/(PCDB + DK).$$

24. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 1, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.64 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

25. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 21, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.64 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

26. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 22, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.64 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

27. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 23, wherein the following is satisfied:

$$0.58 < V4 < 0.64 \text{ with } V4 = PCDS / (PCDB - DK).$$

28. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 1, wherein the first pairs of tracks and the second pairs of tracks are arranged so as to alternate across the circumference.

29. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 21, wherein the first pairs of tracks and the second pairs of tracks are arranged so as to alternate across the circumference.

30. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 1, wherein the joint comprises eight balls.

31. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 21, wherein the joint comprises eight balls.

32. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 22, wherein the joint comprises eight balls.

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33. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 24, wherein the joint comprises eight balls.

34. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 1, wherein the joint is designed to have a maximum angle of articulation ranging between 25° and 45°.

35. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 21, wherein the joint is designed to have a maximum angle of articulation ranging between 25° and 45°.

36. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 34, wherein the outer joint part comprises a joint base formed on one side thereof, the base including a formed-on journal.

37. (new) A constant velocity joint according to claim 35, wherein the outer joint part comprises a joint base formed on one side thereof, the base including a formed-on journal.

38. (new) A driveshaft comprising two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft, wherein at least one of the constant velocity joints is a joint according to claim 1.

39. (new) A driveshaft comprising two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft, wherein at least one of the constant velocity joints is a joint according to claim 21.

40. (new) A driveshaft according to claim 38, wherein the intermediate shaft comprises an axial plunging unit.

41. (new) A driveshaft according to claim 39, wherein the intermediate shaft comprises an axial plunging unit.

42. (new) A motor vehicle with at least two driveshafts which each comprise two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft and which each

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connect a differential drive to a wheel hub unit, wherein at least one of the joints is a joint according to claim 1, and a the shaft journal of same is inserted into the differential drive.

43. (new) A motor vehicle with at least two driveshafts which each
5 comprise two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft and which each connect a differential drive to a wheel hub unit, wherein at least one of the joints is a joint according to claim 21, and a the shaft journal of same is inserted into the differential drive.

44. (new) A motor vehicle with at least two driveshafts which each
10 comprise two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft and which each connect a differential drive to a wheel hub unit, wherein at least one of the joints is a joint according to claim 1, and a journal of same is inserted into the wheel hub unit.

45. (new) A motor vehicle with at least two driveshafts which each
15 comprise two constant velocity joints and an intermediate shaft and which each connect a differential drive to a wheel hub unit, wherein at least one of the joints is a joint according to claim 21, and a journal of same is inserted into the wheel hub unit.

46. (new) A motor vehicle with a driveshaft which comprises at least two constant velocity universal joints and an intermediate shaft wherein at least one of the constant velocity joints is a joint according to claim 1.

20 47. (new) A motor vehicle with a driveshaft which comprises at least two constant velocity universal joints and an intermediate shaft wherein at least one of the constant velocity joints is a joint according to claim 21.

48. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 46, wherein the driveshaft comprises three intermediate shafts which are connected via constant
25 velocity universal joints.

49. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 47, wherein the driveshaft comprises three intermediate shafts which are connected via constant velocity universal joints.

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50. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 46, wherein at one end of the driveshaft there is arranged a constant velocity plunging joint.

51. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 47, wherein at one end of the driveshaft there is arranged a constant velocity plunging joint.

5 52. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 46, wherein the driveshaft connects a gearbox output with a differential input.

53. (new) A motor vehicle according to claim 47, wherein the driveshaft connects a gearbox output with a differential input.

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ABSTRACT

[0043] A constant velocity joint (11) in the form of a counter track joint wherein, when the joint is in the aligned condition, the ratio (V1) of the pitch circle diameter (PCDS) of the shaft toothing in the inner joint part (15) in the power of three relative to the product of the ball diameter (DK) squared and pitch circle diameter (PCDB) of the balls (17) assumes a value ranging between 0.9 and 1.3.